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LATIN NOT A DEAD LANGUAGE

THE LANGUAGE OF THE ROMANS IS STILL SPOKEN TODAY BY THEIR DESCENDANTS IN MANY LANDS

Latin has long been spoken of as a dead language. While it is true that Latin as it was spoken by the Romans and by the learned people of the Middle Ages is not heard today, so it is equally true that the English of Alfred the Great and of Chaucer does not live in the speech of the twentieth century.

The pronunciation of a language changes continually, but the variation from one generation to another is so slight that it is not noticed, whereas several centuries make a considerable difference. English is not a dead language, even if its present written and spoken form is very different from *The Song of Beowulf*; German is not dead, though the language of the Kaiser would not be recognized by the mediaeval minstrels who recited the *Niebelungen Lied*. Likewise Latin did not die; it merely became transformed, owing to the influences of time, location, the character of the native stock upon which it was grafted, and various other circumstances. Just as the modern languages possess a number of dialects, a fact best illustrated by the many dialects in German, just so, as the centuries went by, Latin was gradually changed and became diversified into the dialects known as the Romance languages, namely, French, Italian, Portuguese, Roumanian, and Spanish, with other minor divisions. In its various modern forms Latin is used as the official language of nearly two hundred millions of people.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF LATIN

A RECENT INVESTIGATOR PROVES BY FIGURES THAT LATIN IS PRACTICAL

Do Latin and Greek have greater value in training the mind than the modern languages have? Tests recently conducted apparently show that they do and that there is fallacy in the contention of psychologists and educational experts that training gained in one field of study cannot be transferred to another.

E. A. Partridge of the East High School, Rochester, New York, recently found the English of students who had studied Latin to be much better than that of students who had not known Latin.

The Rochester man took 783 third-year English papers and arranged them according to the amount of classical study or modern-language study the writers had done.

Papers of pupils who had taken one year of Latin showed an average grade of 65 per cent. Students who had two years of Latin had an average of 69 per cent. And the three-year Latin students had 76 per cent.

Students whose only study of foreign language had been in Latin started with an average of 61 per cent in the first year, increased to 69 per cent in the second, and reached 78 per cent in the third, while pupils who had taken modern language only began with 61 per cent, increased to 65 per cent for the second year, and reached only 68 per cent the third year.

Advocates of study of the classical languages interpret these tests as proving that Latin is superior to modern languages in mental training. They declare that what Latin did for these students in English it did for them in other subjects.

The tests revealed also that thirteen of the Latin students made grades between 90 per cent and 100 per cent, while not a single student with modern languages only was found to have done this well.

Nineteen Latin students got between 80 per cent and 90 per cent, while only nine modern language students obtained equally good grades.

AN OUTLOOK

"Studying Greek is like opening a window in a blank wall of a dwelling. The outlook is not directly upon the marts of trade or upon the highways of finance, but it commands a wide horizon of land and sea."

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